

IN THE NEWS

Honorary Commanders Program kicks off at CAFB

**Story and photo by
Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs**

Base leaders recognized a local community leader as "the godfather of Charleston AFB" during a ceremony March 9, launching the base Honorary Commanders Program in the Charleston Club.

Col. Rusty Findley, 437th Airlift Wing commander, presented a portrait drawing to Sam Lyons during a brief ceremony in the Charleston Club. The award was presented to Lyons because of his long-standing support of the base and will be displayed in the Charleston Club. Findley has affectionately called Lyons the "godfather of Charleston AFB" because of that strong support.

The presentation established Lyons as the first "Ambassador of Charleston AFB," a program to recognize community leaders for their strong support of the base. The presentation was part of a ceremony to kick-off the Honorary Commanders Program, which matches local area business leaders with wing groups, squadrons and tenant units.

In assuming the title of

honorary commander, these civic leaders will be invited to a number of base events and attend unit functions as if they were a member of the squadron or group. Forty-seven business leaders are participating in the program this year. Most squadrons have two honorary commanders. Each honorary commander joined their respective squadron by receiving their unit's guidon during a brief ceremony.

Lyons is a 12-year veteran of the U.S. Navy and has called Charleston his home since leaving the Navy in 1957. He is currently the director of business development for Palmetto Ford and is the honorary commander for the 437 AW commander.

During the ceremony, a short video was played that depicted the sacrifices made by the armed forces during the Korean War and Findley cited Lyons' service during World War II and the Korean War.

"Today, we have started a new tradition at Charleston Air Force Base," said Findley. "We're paying tribute to someone who is a part of that legacy (WW II and Korean War veteran), but that legacy didn't stop at the end of the

Korean War. He is a veteran of many wars and triumphs at Charleston AFB. Through the years, he has been the staunchest supporter of Charleston AFB and the greatest friend in the community that a commander could ever want.

"When I was at Grand Forks (AFB, N.D.), we called it our ambassadors program and those were the community leaders that put much time and energy to support the young men and women that were going to follow in that legacy," continued Findley. "Today, we are marking the first ambassador to Charleston AFB in the community. It is appropriate and right that 'the godfather of Charleston AFB,' Sam Lyons, my friend, be that person."

Findley hopes that many more community leaders will follow in Lyons' footsteps. Lyons accepted the honor and then spoke briefly.

"It is a wonderful surprise," Lyons said. "But as many of you know, I've never been without words. There has never been a time where I felt I could do anything by myself. All of you have helped me through the years and I am eternally grateful. Good luck to all of you."

"Hopefully, this new award will set an example for other people to follow," continued Lyons. "Maybe we can get more civilians involved in the base."

Retired Navy Admiral Jim Flatley, chairman of the Patriots Point foundation, also spoke highly of Lyons.

"I came here about 10 years ago to take over Patriot's Point, when it was in ruins," said Flatley. "Sam was one of the first guys to say 'hi' to me and took me under his mantle. He's been mentoring me ever since. He's an open, generous human being and I wanted to be here today be-

cause no one deserves this recognition more than Sam."

Lyons has received the Air Mobility Command Distinguished Citizen Award and has been extensively involved in community activities. He has received a large number of awards and recognition for his involvement.

The mission of the Honorary Commanders Program is to create a partnership with the community and to generate increased support for the base workforce, both military and civilian. The program was reactivated February 2000 and this is the second year for the program.



Col. Rusty Findley, 437th Airlift Wing commander, presents a pencil drawing to Sam Lyons, 437 AW honorary commander, during the Honorary Commanders ceremony.

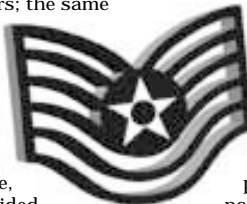
High year of tenure for E-6 to become 22 years

Team Charleston members are applauding a recently announced decision to change technical sergeant high year of tenure from 20 to 22 years.

Enlisted tenures are governed by the Total Objective Plan for Career Airmen Personnel and were last revised in 1991. At that time, technical sergeant length of service was reduced from 23 to 20 years; the same as staff sergeants. The impending force drawdown was a major factor in deciding to keep both E-5 and E-6 HYT maximums at 20 years. By doing this, involuntary separation programs were, for the most part, avoided, said Senior Master Sgt. Larry Welch, superintendent of force structure plans at the air staff.

With force drawdowns done, and having returned to an era with more stable end-strength, a review of enlisted HYT rates was accomplished in 2000. The review indicated while overall HYT rates were on target, some fine-tuning was in order for technical sergeants, Welch said.

"There were several compelling arguments for increasing technical sergeant HYT to 22 years," he said. "First, it's an opportunity to reward technical sergeants for career advancement and let them stay in the service longer. Second, it establishes a natural HYT bridge between staff sergeant HYT of 20 years and master sergeant HYT of 24 years service."



"Finally, input from the field indicates our enlisted members support the change," Welch said.

Most Team Charleston members are supporting the change in policy.

"It's a good thing that was a long time coming," said Tech. Sgt. Todd Bellamy, 437th Aerial Port Squadron. "I know a lot of people will still want to retire at twenty years, but for the few that want to continue to serve, this will allow them to stay longer and pass along their experience to the younger troops."

Although this change is effective July 1, all technical sergeants, re-

gardless of Air Force specialty code, are now eligible to apply for the fiscal 2001 Temporary HYT Extension Program. This will allow technical sergeants with HYT dates before July 1 to apply for a HYT extension to the 22 years of service point, according to Welch.

"I think this is good move for the Air Force," said Tech. Sgt. Adrian Brown, 437th Security Forces Squadron. "This allows the Air Force to keep a lot of good experience around longer and to continue to provide airmen and junior NCOs needed guidance to help them. It's a win-win situation for everyone."

Those who have an approved retirement on file have the option to request withdrawal of retirement or retiring on the approved retirement date. For more information on change to the Technical Sergeant HYT, contact the Military Personnel Flight at 963-4562, 963-4563 or 963-6211. Implementation guidance is forthcoming from the Air Force Personnel Center. (AFPN. Senior Airman Donald Church, 437 AW Public Affairs, also contributed to this story.)



Joint Healthcare Consumers Advisory Council meeting

The 437th Medical Group invites everyone to attend a Joint Healthcare Consumer Advisory Council meeting Thursday, 2 p.m., at the base theater.

There will be discussions on the latest healthcare benefit issues resulting from the National Defense Authorization Act.

There will be updates from the Naval Hospital Charleston and the Charleston AFB Clinic on local healthcare services.

For more information, call 743-7607 or 963-6710.